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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, October 9, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THE COOKIE JAR." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics and the Extension Service, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

The molasses cookie is in the spotlight in New York State these days. At least, my friends tell me that a big contest is going on to determine the best cookie baker in the State and that ovens are pledged warm support. The contest, which is for Grange members, closes in December, so these days many rural housewives are trying out their favorite recipes. Home demonstration agents are to be the judges and they ought to have plenty of inside information on molasses cookies before the contest ends.

Well, while all this excitement is going on in New York State we may just as well have some cookie conversation. Whether you're baking for a contest or just for your family, it's nice to know the tricks of good cookie making. Of course, you can buy many excellent cookies in the stores these days. You don't have to slave away at a hot oven all the year round to keep the cookie jar filled, as old-fashioned cooks used to do. But, after all, nothing is quite like the flavor of a good homemade cookie. Then, homemade cookies are often less expensive. And, if you make them yourself, you know the quality of the ingredients. A good supply of wholesome cookies makes you ready for guests that drop in, for children's lunch boxes, and for emergency desserts.

Old-time cooks often did their cooking the hardest way. They got results, but they labored for them. Today, we're interested in short cuts and labor-saving methods. The cookie seems to me a good illustration of this. Just read over the cookie recipes your grandmother and great-grandmother used. They were strenuous recipes -- lots of work in mixing, and more work in rolling and cutting out.

Nowadays, the icebox cookie and the drop cookie are more popular than the rolled and cut cookie, largely because they are easier and quicker to make. In fact, you might call the icebox cookie the modern substitute for the rolled variety. About the same basic mixture will suit either method of preparation and the same moderate oven.

You may be asking: "Will the quicker method give as good results?" Better, often. You see, the old-fashioned rolled-out method had one great disadvantage. The dough stuck to the board and the rolling pin unless you used plenty of flour. And this flour often made the cookie too stiff -- spoiled the flavor and the texture. Old-time cookie recipes often advised chilling the dough to make it easier to handle without so much flour. And they also advised

rolling out just a small amount of dough at a time and cutting closely so you would have minimum of trimmings. Nevertheless, old-time ginger snaps and soft molasses cookies and chocolate and sugar cookies all were very likely to be a little too stiff and floury.

If you make cookies by the icebox method, you can use a richer, softer dough with resulting crisp, flavorful cookies, because you don't have to roll out on the board. But, you can't mix and bake icebox cookies immediately. They have to stand overnight at least in the refrigerator to be thoroughly chilled. I probably don't need to tell you how to make icebox cookies. You just form the dough into a roll, chill the roll, and when you're ready to bake the cookies, slice off the hard dough in thin, even slices with a thin, long-bladed slicing knife. The resulting cookies are round or square according to the shape of the roll. The dough for most ice-box cookies is rich. Like rolled cookies, they take a moderate oven and the exact time for baking depends on the thickness of the slice.

Now just a word about drop cookies. These are the cookies made by dropping dough from a spoon onto a baking sheet. They don't come out even in shape. Naturally, they require a thinner mixture -- softer dough, than rolled or icebox cookies. And naturally, the temperature of the oven is most important in baking them. When drop cookies go in the oven, the oven must be hot enough to form a crust of them quickly and keep them from spreading too much. Then, those cookies need a cooler oven to finish baking without burning. Good examples of drop cookies are: macaroons, rocks, chocolate and molasses drops, and mixtures of cereals or cocoanut in soft dough or with just egg as a binder.

Well, that about covers the three types of cookies as we know them and the problems in the making of each kind.

Now, for your cookie jar, I'd like to submit the best recipe I know for molasses icebox wafers -- or crisp snaps, as some people call them. Of course, if you prefer to make your cookies by the old-time rolled-and-cut method, this mixture will be all right if you chill the dough before rolling. But it's planned for the quick icebox method. Seven ingredients: 1 cup of molasses..... 1/2 cup of butter..... 1/2 teaspoon soda..... 3 and one-fourth cups sifted flour..... 2 tablespoons sugar..... 1 to 2 tablespoons ginger..... and 1 and one-half teaspoons salt. Once more. (Repeat ingredients.) Now, first heat the molasses to the boiling point and pour it over the fat. Then, add the sifted dry ingredients. Mix well, and make into a long roll as large around as the cookies are to be. Wrap this roll of dough in waxed paper and put in in the ice box. When you are ready to bake, cut the roll in very thin slices with a sharp knife and bake in a moderate oven until lightly browned. Remove the cookies from the pan while hot. Store the snaps in a tightly covered container so they will keep their crispness.

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